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Attorney's Docket No. 9144-5

PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re: Brader-Araje *et al.*

Serial No.: 09/549,370

Filed: April 13, 2000

Group Art Unit: 3625

Confirmation No.: 8285

Examiner: Gart, Matthew S.

For: **SYSTEMS, METHODS AND COMPUTER PROGRAM PRODUCTS THAT
FACILITATE PARTICIPATION IN ONLINE AUCTIONS VIA AN
INTERMEDIARY WEB SITE**

Date: March 17, 2005

Mail Stop Appeal Brief - Patents
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

**TRANSMITTAL OF APPEAL BRIEF
(PATENT APPLICATION--37 C.F.R. § 41.37)**

1. Transmitted herewith is the APPEAL BRIEF for the above-identified application, pursuant to the Notice of Appeal filed on January 25, 2005.

2. This application is filed on behalf of
☐ a small entity.

3. Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 41.20(b)(2), the fee for filing the Appeal Brief is:

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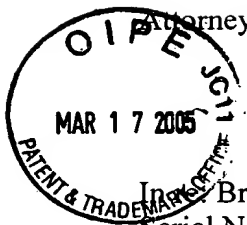
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Erin A. Campion



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APPELLANTS' BRIEF ON APPEAL UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.191

Sir:

This Appeal Brief is filed pursuant to the "Notice of Appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences" filed January 25, 2005.

Real Party In Interest

The real party in interest is assignee Siebel Systems, Inc., San Mateo, California.

Related Appeals and Interferences

Appellants are aware of no appeals or interferences that would be affected by the present appeal.

Status of Claims

Appellants appeal the second rejection of pending Claims 1, 2, 4-6, 8 and 9 which, as of the filing date of this Brief, remain under consideration. Claims 10-53 are withdrawn. The attached Appendix A presents the claims at issue as twice rejected in the Office Action of October 25, 2004.

Status of Amendments

The attached Appendix A presents the claims as amended by the Response to the First Office Action of October 4, 2003, which was mailed on January 2, 2004, and by the Preliminary Amendment of September 2, 2004. These Amendments were entered.

Summary of the Claimed Subject Matter

The present invention, as recited in Claims 1, 2, 4-6, 8 and 9, is directed to methods for allowing users to obtain information about, and participate in, auctions being conducted at a plurality of on-line auction sites. A Web site of an intermediary maintains information about items being auctioned at a plurality of remotely located auction sites that are in communication with a computer network, such as the Internet. Auction information is displayable to users accessing the intermediary Web site via clients, such as Web browsers. (Specification, Page 4, Lines 17-29).

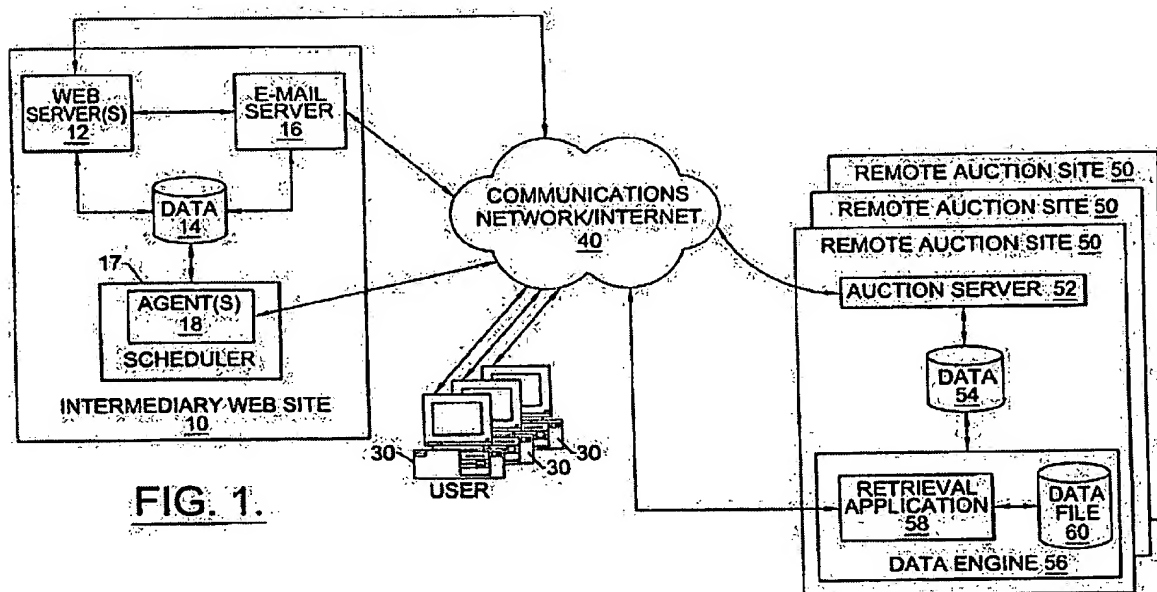
Auction information maintained by the intermediary Web site is kept current or "fresh" by obtaining auction item data at predetermined time intervals that has changed since a previous time for auctions currently being conducted at the respective auction sites. Keywords are extracted from auction item data received by the intermediary Web site and stored in a format that is searchable by users accessing the intermediary web site. Each keyword extracted from auction item data is preferably associated with an item currently being auctioned at a respective one of the plurality of remote, on-line auction sites. (Specification, Page 4, Line 30 - Page 5, Line 11).

Each remote, on-line auction site includes a data engine that is configured to obtain data about each item currently being auctioned at the respective auction site and to communicate with an agent running at the intermediary Web site. The intermediary web site agent is configured to establish a TCP/IP connection with each respective data engine and to send an HTTP request to each respective data engine, via the TCP/IP connection, for updated auction item information. (Specification, Page 5, Lines 12-22).

The data engine at each auction site includes a data file that is configured to store cyclic redundancy checking (CRC) values for each item being auctioned at the respective auction site. A CRC value for "static" information (*i.e.*, auction item data that generally does not change with time) and a CRC value for "dynamic" information (*i.e.*, auction item data that may change with time) is stored for each auction item in a data file. When requested by

the agent, or at other predetermined time intervals, a respective data engine determines whether a data file contains a CRC value for each item currently being auctioned at the respective auction site. The data engine stores CRC values for static and dynamic information in the data file for each item currently being auctioned that does not have CRC values in the data file. For these "new" auction items, the data engine sends the actual static and dynamic information to the intermediary Web site. The data engine at each remote auction site also generates new CRC values and compares these new values with stored CRC values to determine if auction item information has changed. If it is determined that there has been a change in dynamic and/or static information, current dynamic and/or static information is sent to the intermediary Web site. (Specification, Page 5, Line 23 - Page 6, Line 24).

Fig. 1 from Appellants' application is set forth below and illustrates an intermediary Web site **10** that allows users to search and retrieve information from multiple on-line auction sites **50**. The intermediary Web site **10** communicates with users **30** accessing the intermediary Web site **10** and communicates with each of a plurality of remote, on-line auction sites **50** in communication with the computer network **40**. (Specification, Page 15, Line 28 - Page 18, Line 16).



Each remote auction site **50** includes an auction server **52** and at least one database **54** for storing information about items currently being auctioned. Each auction site **50** also

includes a data engine 56 that is configured to obtain information about items auctioned at the respective auction site 50. Each data engine 56 includes a data retrieval application 58 that is configured to retrieve data from an auction site database. In response to a request from the intermediary Web site 10, the retrieval application 58 at a respective auction site 50 queries the auction database(s) 54 for information about each auction item that has changed since a previous time. (Specification, Page 18, Line 17 - Page 20, Line 4).

The intermediary Web site 10 displays to requesting Web clients of users 30 selected information about auction items at various ones of the remotely located auction sites 50. The intermediary Web site 10 further includes an agent 18 that is configured to communicate with and retrieve auction item data from each auction site data engine 56. At various times as scheduled by a scheduler 17, agent 18 sends a request to a respective data engine 56 at one of the respective auction sites 50 to obtain auction item data that has changed since a previous time for auctions currently being conducted at the respective auction site. (Specification, Page 21, Lines 7-27).

Agent 18 updates the database(s) 14 at the intermediary Web site 10 with auction item data received from various ones of the auction site data engines 56. Agent 18 extracts keywords from information received from the various data engines 58 and stores the extracted keywords in one or more tables associated with the database(s) 14. Each stored keyword is also associated with an item currently being auctioned at a respective one of the plurality of remotely located auction sites 50. (Specification, Page 21, Line 28 - Page 22, Line 9).

Stored keywords are searchable by users accessing the intermediary Web site 10. When a user request is received by the Web server 12 a search is initiated to locate stored keywords that match keywords in the user request. Each stored keyword is preferably associated with an item currently being auctioned at a respective one of a plurality of remotely located auction sites 50. (Specification, Page 22, Lines 10-20).

Upon locating one or more keyword matches, the Web server 12 serves the requesting user with a list of items currently being auctioned at one or more of the remotely-located auction sites 50 that match the user-provided keywords. Each displayed auction item is selectably linked to the respective auction site such that, upon user activation (*e.g.*, a mouse click), the user's Web client is redirected to the respective auction site where the selected item is currently being auctioned. (Specification, Page 22, Line 21 - Page 23, Line 4).

Grounds of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal

Claims 1, 2, 4-6, 8 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,898,836 to Freivald et al. ("Freivald") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,405,175 to Ng ("Ng").

Grouping of Claims

For purposes of this appeal, Claims 1, 2, 4 and 5 (Group I) may be considered as standing or falling together, and Claims 6, 8 and 9 (Group II) may be considered as standing or falling together.

Arguments

I. Introduction

Each of the pending claims of the present application stands rejected as obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). A determination under §103 that an invention would have been obvious to someone of ordinary skill in the art is a conclusion of law based on fact. *Panduit Corp. v. Dennison Mfg. Co.* 810 F.2d 1593, 1 U.S.P.Q.2d 1593 (Fed. Cir. 1987), *cert. denied*, 107 S.Ct. 2187. After the involved facts are determined, the decision maker must then make the legal determination of whether the claimed invention as a whole would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was unknown, and just before it was made. *Id.* at 1596. The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) has the initial burden under § 103 to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, the prior art reference or references when combined must teach or suggest *all* the recitations of the claims, and there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. M.P.E.P. § 2143. The mere fact that references can be combined or modified does not render the resultant combination obvious unless the prior art also suggests the desirability of the combination. M.P.E.P. § 2143.01(citing *In re Mills*, 916 F.2d 680, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d 1430 (Fed. Cir. 1990)). As emphasized by the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, to support combining references, evidence of a suggestion, teaching, or motivation to combine must be **clear and particular**, and this requirement for clear and particular evidence

is not met by broad and conclusory statements about the teachings of references. *In re Dembiczak*, 50 U.S.P.Q.2d 1614, 1617 (Fed. Cir. 1999). In an even more recent decision, the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has stated that, to support combining or modifying references, there must be **particular** evidence from the prior art as to the reason the skilled artisan, with no knowledge of the claimed invention, would have selected these components for combination in the manner claimed. *In re Kotzab*, 55 U.S.P.Q.2d 1313, 1317 (Fed. Cir. 2000).

Furthermore, as recently stated by the Federal Circuit with regard to the selection and combination of references:

This factual question of motivation is material to patentability, and could not be resolved on subjective belief and unknown authority. It is improper, in determining whether a person of ordinary skill would have been led to this combination of references, simply to "[use] that which the inventor taught against its teacher." W.L. Gore v. Garlock, Inc., 721 F.2d 1540, 1553, 220 USPQ 303, 312-13 (Fed. Cir. 1983). Thus the Board must not only assure that the requisite findings are made, based on evidence of record, but must also explain the reasoning by which the findings are deemed to support the agency's conclusion....

In re Sang Su Lee, 277 F.3d 1338, 1343 (Fed. Cir. 2002).

Appellants respectfully submit that the pending claims are patentable over Freivald and Ng because Freivald and Ng, alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the recitations of the pending claims and because the reasoning behind such combination has not been established with clear and particular evidence as required by the Federal Circuit. The patentability of the pending claims is discussed in detail hereinafter.

II. Freivald and Ng

Freivald describes a change detection tool that automatically retrieves and compares web documents for recent changes. (Freivald, Abstract). The Freivald change detection server 20 performs three basic functions: it registers a web page document for change detection, periodically re-fetches the document and compares for changes, and e-mails a change notice to the registered user if a change is detected. (Freivald, Col. 6, lines 47-54). A user selects text on a web page of interest by highlighting the text. Only subsequent changes to the selected text are reported back to the user. Non-selected text is ignored. (Freivald, Abstract).

Ng describes a searchable database that contains product and price information ***submitted by users who are rewarded for submitting the information.*** The following passage from Ng is the only passage from Ng that is being relied upon by the Examiner to support the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103:

Change-detection web site 29 can be used to periodically and automatically search online auction site 18 for a particular item and price. Thus items that are infrequently on auction can be found if the user is patient. See U.S. Pat. No. 5,898,836 by Freivald et al., assigned to NetMind Services, Inc. of Campbell, Calif. (Ng, Col. 2, Lines 31-36).

Nothing else from Ng is relied on by the Examiner in the obviousness rejection. Moreover, the Examiner does not take the position that Appellants' claimed invention is rendered obvious by combining the change detection tool of Freivald with the Ng searchable database that contains product and price information submitted by rewarded users. It is merely the single-cited passage of Ng and Freivald that are being "combined" by the Examiner.

Appellants' independent Claim 1 recites a method of updating information maintained at an intermediary web site on a computer network about items being auctioned at a plurality of remotely located auction sites on the computer network, wherein the information is displayable to users accessing the intermediary web site via the computer network, comprising:

obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time for auctions currently being conducted at the respective auction sites, ***wherein each auction site includes a data engine that is configured to obtain data about each item currently being auctioned at the respective auction site, and wherein the intermediary web site includes an agent that is configured to communicate with and retrieve auction item data from each auction site data engine,*** comprising:

establishing a TCP/IP connection between the agent and each respective data engine; and

sending an HTTP request from the agent to each respective data engine via the TCP/IP connection to obtain auction item data that has changed since a previous time;

extracting keywords from the obtained auction item data ***via the agent***; and

storing the extracted keywords ***via the agent***, wherein each stored keyword is associated with an item currently being auctioned at a respective one of the plurality of remotely located auction sites, and wherein the stored keywords are searchable by users accessing the intermediary web site. (Emphasis added).

Neither Freivald nor the above-cited Ng passage, alone or in combination, teach or suggest all the recitations of Appellants' independent Claim 1. Specifically, Freivald and Ng each fail to teach or suggest a data engine at each auction site that is configured to obtain data about each item currently being auctioned at the respective auction site. In fact, the Examiner concedes that Freivald and Ng, alone or in combination, do not teach a data engine at each site. (Office Action of October 25, 2004, Page 4). However, the Examiner concludes that to have provided "a data engine at each site, rather than the central data engine already taught by Freivald ... would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art in order that changes to various sites could be reported to a user immediately upon the posting of any change to a particular site, rather than upon a later periodic refetching of such site by the Freivald et al. server." (Office Action of October 25, 2004, Page 4). The Examiner further concludes that "such modification would have further reduced the time and effort required of a user in keeping abreast of changes at a particular site" and cites Col. 13, Lines 9-10 of Freivald, which is set forth below.

The invention reduces the time and effort required by a user wanting to keep abreast of changes at a web site. (Freivald, Col. 13, Lines 9-10).

The Examiner then states that "such distribution is already contemplated by Freivald et al. which teaches that '[t]he change-detection tool can be located on a server separate from the web server itself and simply be called by the site's web server'". The Examiner cites Col. 14, Lines 23-25, which is set forth below.

The change-detection tool can be located on a server separate from the web server itself and simply be called by the site's web server. (Freivald, Col. 14, Lines 23-25).

Appellants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's conclusions, and respectfully assert that these conclusions of obviousness are not supported by clear and particular evidence as required by the Federal Circuit. First, the Examiner's conclusion that a data engine located at each auction site would have been obvious because changes *could be reported immediately upon posting thereof* is simply not substantiated with any evidence, much less any clear and particular evidence. The Examiner has merely made the assumption that a data engine at each auction site could report changes faster than a data engine that performs periodic refetching, and then concludes that it would be desirable to have a data engine at each auction site. However, the Examiner presents no evidence in support of this conclusion. It is conceivable that the Freivald change detection tool could be configured to

continuously refetch changes from remote sites. It is also conceivable that a data engine at each auction site could perform periodic refreshing, and therefore be slower than a single data engine that performs periodic refreshing.

Appellants respectfully assert that it is conceivable that the Freivald change detection-tool could detect changes at remote sites faster than a data engine located at a remote site, according to Appellants' invention. No clear and particular evidence has been presented that unequivocally establishes that a data engine located at a remote auction site necessarily reports changes at the site faster or more immediately than a data engine that is remotely located and that refetches changes from the site. As such, the Examiner's conclusion lacks clear and particular evidence that a data engine at a remote site could detect changes immediately but that a data engine such as the Freivald change-detection tool could not.

In addition, the Examiner's conclusion that the distribution of data engines at *all* remote sites is contemplated by Freivald is just wrong. Freivald simply states that the change-detection tool can be located on *a* server separate from the web server itself and simply be called by the site's web server. According to the teachings of Freivald, it is just as likely that the change-detection tool of Freivald is located on *only one* remote server as it is on *all* remote servers. In fact, it is just as likely that the change-detection tool of Freivald is located on any number of remote servers less than all remote servers as it is on *all* remote servers.

Moreover, based on the language of Freivald (*i.e.*, "change-detection tool can be located on *a server* separate from the web server"), it is more likely that Freivald intends for his change-detection tool to be located on only one server. The use of the word "a" and the context in which the word "a" is used, does not clearly and particularly indicate that a change-detection tool will be located at *all* remote servers.

Finally, the cited Freivald passages do not say that the change-detection tool is located at the site of interest (*i.e.*, the site where web page changes will be made, such as an auction site). To the contrary, Freivald describes locating his change-detection tool at a *third party* server. This is completely different from Appellants' invention where the data engine is located at the site where changes occur. Thus, Freivald contemplates locating the change detection tool at a server that is different from the web server *and* different from the auction sites, as well.

Freivald and Ng, alone or in combination, also fail to teach or suggest an intermediary web site that includes an agent that is configured to communicate with and retrieve auction item data from each auction site data engine. Furthermore, Freivald and Ng fail to teach or suggest using an intermediary web site agent to extract keywords and store the extracted keywords so as to be searchable by users accessing the intermediary web site. The Examiner has not produced any clear and particular evidence that either Freivald or Ng, alone or in combination, teach either of these recitations.

Freivald and Ng, alone or in combination, also fail to teach or suggest extracting keywords from obtained auction item data *via an agent* and storing the extracted keywords *via the agent*, wherein each stored keyword is associated with an item currently being auctioned at a respective one of the plurality of remotely located auction sites, and wherein the stored keywords are searchable by users accessing the intermediary web site.

Because Freivald and Ng, alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest *all* the recitations of Claim 1, Appellants respectfully request reversal of the present rejections of Claim 1, and the claims dependent therefrom, under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Appellants' independent Claim 6 recites a method of updating information maintained at an intermediary web site on a computer network about items being auctioned at a plurality of remotely located auction sites on the computer network, wherein the information is displayable to users accessing the intermediary web site via the computer network, comprising:

obtaining data about each item currently being auctioned at each respective auction site, *wherein each auction site includes a data engine* comprising a data file configured to store cyclic redundancy checking (CRC) values for static and dynamic information about each auction item being auctioned at the respective auction site, wherein static information comprises an identification of an auction item, wherein dynamic information comprises at least one of bid information and price information associated with an auction item;

sending a request from the intermediary web site to the plurality of respective data engines to obtain auction item data that has changed since a previous time for auctions currently being conducted at the respective auction sites, *wherein the intermediary web site includes an agent that is configured to communicate with and retrieve auction item data from each auction site data engine*;

obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time for auctions currently being conducted at the respective auction sites, comprising the following performed by each respective data engine:

determining whether a data file contains a CRC value for each item currently being auctioned;

storing CRC values in the data file for each item currently being auctioned that does not have a CRC value in the data file;
sending static and dynamic information to the intermediary web site for each item currently being auctioned that does not have a CRC value in the data file; and
updating the information maintained at the intermediary web site with the static and dynamic information received from each respective data engine, comprising:

extracting keywords from the received static and dynamic information via the agent; and

storing the extracted keywords via the agent, wherein each stored keyword is associated with an item currently being auctioned at a respective one of the plurality of remotely located auction sites, and wherein the stored keywords are searchable by users accessing the intermediary web site. (Emphasis added).

Neither Freivald nor the above-cited Ng passage, alone or in combination, teach or suggest all the recitations of independent Claim 6. Specifically, and as discussed above, Freivald and Ng, alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest a data engine located at *each* of a plurality of auction sites and wherein each data engine includes a data file that stores CRC values for static and dynamic information about each auction item being auctioned at the respective auction site. Freivald and Ng fail to teach or suggest an intermediary web site having an agent that communicates with and retrieves auction item data from each auction site data engine. Furthermore, Freivald and Ng fail to teach or suggest obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time that includes extracting keywords from the received static and dynamic information via the intermediary web site agent, and storing the extracted keywords via the intermediary web site agent.

Because Freivald and Ng fail to teach or suggest *all* the recitations of Claim 6, Appellants respectfully request withdrawal of the present rejections of Claim 6, and the claims dependent therefrom, under 35 U.S.C. §103.

III. Conclusion


In light of the above discussion, Appellants submit that each of the pending claims is patentable over the cited references and, therefore, request reversal of the rejections of Claims 1, 2, 4-6, 8 and 9.

It is not believed that an extension of time and/or additional fee(s) are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. In the event, however, that an extension of time is necessary to allow consideration of this

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paper, such an extension is hereby petitioned for under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a). Any additional fees believed to be due in connection with this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0220.

Respectfully submitted,



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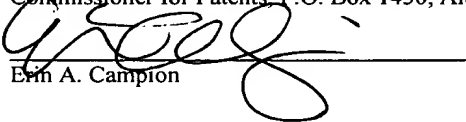
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Erin A. Campion

APPENDIX A
Pending Claims Serial No.: 09/549,370
Filed: April 13, 2000

1. (Previously Presented) A method of updating information maintained at an intermediary web site on a computer network about items being auctioned at a plurality of remotely located auction sites on the computer network, wherein the information is displayable to users accessing the intermediary web site via the computer network, the method comprising:

obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time for auctions currently being conducted at the respective auction sites, wherein each auction site includes a data engine that is configured to obtain data about each item currently being auctioned at the respective auction site, and wherein the intermediary web site includes an agent that is configured to communicate with and retrieve auction item data from each auction site data engine, comprising:

establishing a TCP/IP connection between the agent and each respective data engine; and

sending an HTTP request from the agent to each respective data engine via the TCP/IP connection to obtain auction item data that has changed since a previous time;

extracting keywords from the obtained auction item data via the agent; and

storing the extracted keywords via the agent, wherein each stored keyword is associated with an item currently being auctioned at a respective one of the plurality of remotely located auction sites, and wherein the stored keywords are searchable by users accessing the intermediary web site.

2. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1 wherein obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time is performed at predetermined time intervals.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 3 wherein the data engine at each auction site comprises a data file configured to store cyclic redundancy

checking (CRC) values for static and dynamic information about each auction item being auctioned at the respective auction site, wherein static information comprises an identification of an auction item, wherein dynamic information comprises at least one of bid information and price information associated with an auction item, and wherein obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time comprises the following performed by each respective data engine:

- determining whether the data file contains a CRC value for each item currently being auctioned;

- storing CRC values in the data file for each item currently being auctioned that does not have a CRC value in the data file; and

- sending static and dynamic information to the intermediary web site for each item currently being auctioned that does not have a CRC value in the data file.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 4 wherein obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time further comprises the following performed by each respective data engine:

- generating new CRC values for each item currently being auctioned;

- comparing the new CRC values with CRC values stored within the data file for each respective auction item;

- storing the new CRC values for each item currently being auctioned in the respective data file if the new CRC values differ from the stored CRC values; and

- sending to the intermediary web site current information for each item currently being auctioned.

6. (Previously Presented) A method of updating information maintained at an intermediary web site on a computer network about items being auctioned at a plurality of remotely located auction sites on the computer network, wherein the information is displayable to users accessing the intermediary web site via the computer network, the method comprising:

- obtaining data about each item currently being auctioned at each respective auction site, wherein each auction site includes a data engine comprising a data file configured to store cyclic redundancy checking (CRC) values for static and dynamic information about

each auction item being auctioned at the respective auction site, wherein static information comprises an identification of an auction item, wherein dynamic information comprises at least one of bid information and price information associated with an auction item;

sending a request from the intermediary web site to the plurality of respective data engines to obtain auction item data that has changed since a previous time for auctions currently being conducted at the respective auction sites, wherein the intermediary web site includes an agent that is configured to communicate with and retrieve auction item data from each auction site data engine;

obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time for auctions currently being conducted at the respective auction sites, comprising the following performed by each respective data engine:

determining whether a data file contains a CRC value for each item currently being auctioned;

storing CRC values in the data file for each item currently being auctioned that does not have a CRC value in the data file;

sending static and dynamic information to the intermediary web site for each item currently being auctioned that does not have a CRC value in the data file; and

updating the information maintained at the intermediary web site with the static and dynamic information received from each respective data engine, comprising:

extracting keywords from the received static and dynamic information via the agent; and

storing the extracted keywords via the agent, wherein each stored keyword is associated with an item currently being auctioned at a respective one of the plurality of remotely located auction sites, and wherein the stored keywords are searchable by users accessing the intermediary web site.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 6 wherein sending a request from the agent to each of a plurality of respective data engines is performed at predetermined time intervals.

9. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 6 wherein obtaining auction item data that has changed since a previous time further comprises the following performed by each respective data engine:

generating new CRC values for each item currently being auctioned;

comparing the new CRC values with CRC values stored within a data file for each respective auction item;

storing the new CRC values for each item currently being auctioned in the respective data file if the new CRC values differ from the stored CRC values; and

sending to the intermediary web site current information for each item currently being auctioned.